



# DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

## *Economic Development Division*

### m e m o r a n d u m

**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

**FROM:** Elizabeth H. Tyler, Community Development Director

**DATE:** June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **Economic Development Activities Report for April & May 2015**

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### **Business and Development Activity**

#### **Downtown Urbana**

- Work at Lacy's BBQ restaurant at 115 W Main Street is complete. The business owners held a soft opening on May 29<sup>th</sup> and are now open for business.
- The Best of Africa Food Store has opened at 208 W Griggs Street. A Ribbon Cutting was held on Monday May 18<sup>th</sup>. The store offers African staples such as plantains, cassava flour, and salted fish as well as many other items.
- Action Jackson Comics opened at 123 West Main Street and held its ribbon cutting on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The business relocated to Downtown Urbana from Bismarck, ND. The comic store is the latest addition to the Main Street Plaza business mall which now also hosts Error Records, Farm League Skateshop and Muris Technologies.
- On April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, the Urbana Business Association held ribbon cuttings for two new tenants of [co][lab] in Downtown Urbana. Ellie Pinz Studio creates art and educates on art and art history. Jumpstart offers entrepreneurship training including a Summer Startup Camp for youth in the CU community.
- Work is underway for an expansion of Amara Yoga & Arts into the space formerly occupied by the Great Impasta at Lincoln Square.
- The deadline for proposals for the 200 Vine RFP was extended and closed on May 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Volo Broadband has started providing free wireless internet access both in Downtown Urbana and in Blair Park.
- Both Curbanas have been installed in Downtown Urbana for the 2015 season. Crane Alley's was installed in April, while Cafeteria & Company's was installed in May due to a delay caused by adjacent construction work.
- Plans are being developed for an outdoor seating area at Silvercreek restaurant alongside the Boneyard Creek.
- Work is underway on the renovation of the new Strawberry Fields grocery store at 306 West Springfield Avenue.
- Work continues for the expansion of Heel-To-Toe into 108 1/2 West Main Street to accommodate Innovative Bracing.
- Work continues for a second-story expansion of A-Plus VIP Lounge to include a karaoke bar at 214 West Main Street.
- Work is underway for the remodeling and expansion of B Spirits at 306 West Main Street to include an Asian grocery store.
- The demolition of the former Auler building at 202 W Green Street has been completed.

## University-Medical

- Work is underway for a new Korean BBQ restaurant called Bab+ going into Gregory Place East.
- Work continues for the Campus Circle apartment complex on University Avenue.
- Demolition is underway for the expansion of the MTD facility at 1101 East University Avenue.
- Plans have been submitted for an 84-unit student apartment building at 901 Western Avenue.
- The expansion of Gateway Shoppes on University Avenue is filling up with tenants. Work is underway on the Lacey's Place gaming hall, plans are under review for a new Wireless Mike's store, and plans have been submitted for a karaoke lounge.
- In mid-April the Don Juan Cocina Mexicana and Cantina closed its doors at 1106 West University Avenue. The business had been open for approximately one year. New tenants have expressed interest in the property.

## East Urbana

- The demolition of the former Urbana Townhomes property off Lierman Avenue is complete. Herman & Kittle is the selected developer for the redevelopment of the area.

## North Lincoln Avenue

- On May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting celebrating the new location of Illinois American Water at 1406 Cardinal Court.

## Philo Road

- OmniBarre at the Pines closed its business on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Cunningham Avenue

- Urbana True Tire is open at its new location at 608 North Cunningham Avenue.
- Plans are under review for the renovation of the new Urbana Boulders rock climbing gym at 1502 North Cunningham Avenue.
- Plans have been submitted for two, 20-unit apartment buildings at Eastland Apartments located at 1905 N Cunningham Avenue.

## Public Arts Program

- A call for Murals on Glass entries is accepting submissions through June 19. Three works will be selected by a jury, printed on adhesive vinyl, and installed on windows at the Urbana Business Association office and at the Urbana Civic Center.



- Urbana Celebrates the Boneyard!, an event to commemorate the Boneyard Creek Improvements Project, took place on April 11<sup>th</sup> and was attended by over 300 people. A part of the county-wide Boneyard Arts Festival, the celebration included a West African drumming and dance performance by Djibril Camara, a performance by members of the Community Center for the Arts, kids-friendly art-making stations, face painting, buskers, and speeches by City officials. Jack Mackie, the project artist, attended the event and led tours of the park. Two food trucks, including Cracked and Dragon Fire Pizza, parked at the event. Street pole banners surrounding the venue, which are artworks submitted by students from Urbana School District #116 and local artists, will be on display for a few months.
- The current Artist of the Corridor exhibition, with garden and landscape paintings by Beth Darling, is on view from May 4 to July 6 at the City Building and the Urbana Free Library. The opening reception was held on May 21.
- Staff and commissioners have begun planning for the Urbana Art Expo, a juried fine arts exhibition and sale. This will be at the Civic Center on September 13<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00am to 5:00pm. The call for this event will soon be released, and sixteen artists or artist teams will be selected in August.
- Brochures highlighting works of the Urbana Sculpture Program have been printed and distributed. A new template for the Public Arts e-newsletter has also been completed.
- Artist Jerry Savage was featured in the April episode of Art Now!. For the month of May, Art Now! reruns an older episode that features local painter Beth Darling, who is also the current Artist of the Corridor. Next month, Art Now! will highlight the works of Catherine Wiesener, a ceramic artist and faculty member at the University of Illinois.

### **Marketing and Events Activity**

- The May and June editions of “It’s All About U” are available on the UPTV YouTube channel. These programs also air Mondays at 6 p.m. on UPTV.
- The Marketing Coordinator hosted information tables at the USD #116 Kindergarten Connection and the Illinois Marathon Health and Wellness Expo.
- The Urbana Downtown Guide to Restaurants and Retail has been updated for 2015.
- The Downtown Urbana Foodtruck rally is being planned to take place at the Urbana Civic Center the last Tuesday of each month in June, July and August. More information at [http://urbanaillinois.us/foodtruck\\_rally](http://urbanaillinois.us/foodtruck_rally)

### **Urbana’s Market at the Square**

- Market Director Natalie Kenny-Marquez began the weekly Farm Fresh and Fast cooking segment on WCIA News Channel 3’s ciLiving program. The segment appears every Thursday at 4 p.m. Segments are also posted online at [www.illinoishomepage.net](http://www.illinoishomepage.net) under the ciLiving tab.
- In April and May, the Market Director promoted the farmers market on Smile Politely Radio, WCIA News Channel 3’s Ag Answers, WCIA News Channel 3’s ciLiving, News-Gazette.
- Staff promoted Sprouts at the Market at the United Way’s Ready.Set.Grow event at Lincoln Square Mall and also promoted the farmers market at the Working Women’s Expo where over 1,000 people visited the booth.
- The Market at the Square was a sponsor of the May 31<sup>st</sup> Pecha Kucha held at the Krannert Center.

### **Other Updates**

- The partner agencies in the Multimodal Corridor Enhancement (MCORE) Project ([www.mcoreproject.com](http://www.mcoreproject.com)) held an open house on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 in Illini Union.
- Economic Development Division staff organized the May 19<sup>th</sup> Business & Development Luncheon which featured a presentation by Public Works Director Bill Gray on the upcoming MCORE Project.

- During the week of May 11<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Laurel Prussing and Economic Development Manager Brandon Boys represented the City of Urbana in the annual Champaign County First Washington DC Fly-In. The group of regional delegates primarily promoted the importance of investment in transportation infrastructure to Champaign County’s congressional representatives. Key topics included High Speed Rail, Passenger Rail, the I-57/74 interchange, and the Willard Airport Tower and instrumentation.
- Economic Development staff held site visits with Creative Health and Armstrong Lumber.
- A groundbreaking and ribbon cutting ceremony was held on May 8<sup>th</sup> in Urbana to mark the beginning of residential fiber construction under the UC2B/iTV-3 partnership which first began in May of 2014.
- On May 12<sup>th</sup>, several City staff and officials attended a class presentation by UIUC urban planning students at Pizza M in Downtown Urbana entitled “Welcoming Immigrant Owned Businesses”. The presentation also included a panel discussion featuring multiple Urbana business owners.

# Memorandum



**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor  
**FROM:** Cynthia Chandler, Executive Director  
**DATE:** June 1, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Urbana Business Association Activities Report for April and May 2015

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## Membership Growth

Membership renewals continue to come in with 138 of 157 received to date. This accounts for 90% of the 2015 renewals. To date we have received seven cancelations.

The UBA has seen the addition of nine member businesses in the months of April and May bringing our member count to 199. We have received \$27,140 in cash membership dues this fiscal year and have a remaining \$1,705 in outstanding renewal dues.

## Ribbon Cuttings

The UBA has performed three ribbon cutting ceremonies in the months of April and May: Ellie Pinz Studio (April 28), Jumpstart (April 29), and The Best of Africa's Food Store (May 18).

## Downtown Input Session

The first Business Input Session was held on April 13 with elizaBeth Simpson facilitating. This session was held for the downtown district with 13 business owners in attendance; 97 invitations were sent out. A survey was developed and sent out a few weeks prior with 20 responses received. The information gathered from this survey was used in designing the session program. The input session lasted about 90 minutes with a lot of really good discussion. A bulleted summary is included at the end of this report.

Follow-up discussions with elizaBeth Simpson have resulted in a tentative timeline for the next step in the input session process. It has been determined that the next session should be extended to all Urbana businesses with break-out sessions by district. This will allow each district to feed off of the ideas of other districts. The pre-session survey that went out to downtown businesses will be sent to all Urbana businesses in June. This notification will be sent by email where possible and by postcard. The next session will be scheduled for September with reminder communications going out in July and August.

## Middle Market

The final Middle Market was held on April 18. There were a total of 49 vendors this season with 33 new to the Middle Market resulting in an average of 29 vendors per market. An estimated 4,712 visitors to the market had a weekly high of 900 and low of 672. This resulted in an average of 785 visitors per market. The UBA has successfully finalized dates for 2016 and will host eight markets, two each month January through April. This is a 25% increase in dates.

## Uncork Urbana Wine Festival

Planning for the Uncork Urbana Wine Festival continues. The Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association has secured the insurance and liquor license and are coordinating the wineries attending. Entertainment has been finalized with five local artists/bands performing throughout the day - Katie Flynn, Kenna Mae, Ryan Groff of Elsinore, Emily Otnes, and The Diva & The Dude. There is one food truck

confirmed (Dragon Fire Pizza) and two others have indicated applications are forthcoming. Invitations have also gone out to a few local breweries and two have expressed interest however none are confirmed as of yet. The expanded footprint of this event to include the Busey Bank parking lot and Race St (south of Main St and north of Elm St.) will better accommodate the increased interest in this event. It will allow for more tables and chairs and more room for mingling of attendees. Illini Radio Group is our media sponsor.

### Urbana Sweetcorn Festival

The 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Urbana Sweetcorn Festival is in full planning mode. The UBA has finalized sponsorship and contract with Skeff Distributing for beer sales which will feature Budweiser products at this year's festival. To date 20 vendor applications have been received. New this year the UBA has added national headliners to the entertainment line-up for Friday night. Released to the public on May 18 was the announcement of The Church and Psychedelic Furs to an incredible reception. An offer has gone out for the Saturday night headliner and will be announced once finalized. Having a national headliner on Friday night will result in increased attendance.

### Marketing Update:

The first quarter of 2015 saw good growth in visibility through social media for Middle Market and steady growth for the other accounts. The small growth on UBA and loss on Sweetcorn Festival resulted when Facebook removed likes from inactive accounts on March 12. The following charts reflect the growth and reach for the first quarter:

Facebook	New Likes	% Increase	Total Likes	Reach	Impressions
Urbana Business Association	12*	1%	1,427*	6,893	17,809
Holiday Market	10	1%	687	144	293
Middle Market	147	26%	552	10,104	20,610
Sweetcorn Festival	-72*	0%	6,061*	6,423	13,410
Uncork Urbana	22	5%	412	0	0

Twitter	New Likes	% Increase	Total Likes
Urbana Business Association	150	7%	2,209
Holiday Market	5	1%	313
Middle Market	46	14%	324
Sweetcorn Festival	103	7%	1,361

Current radio ads focus on downtown as a destination for dining and shopping. These ads will continue to run until May 30 at which time the Uncork Urbana ads will take over. The UBA continues to maintain a web presence on Smile Politely with three ads placed throughout as well as weekly SPlogs (online blogs).

# Downtown Business Input Session

## Discussion Summary

Current services provided by the UBA:

- New member recognition
- Social media promotion
- *Explore Urbana* weekly e-newsletter weekly coupons
- *All About U* monthly e-newsletter
- Ribbon cuttings
- Website recognition
- Information and assistance
- Access to member mailing list
- Networking opportunities
- Access to small business counseling
- Committee opportunities
- Member window decal

What can UBA do to fulfill its role?

- Marketing other than special events
- Events as a marketing device
- Skill share among members
- Meaningful networking like “speed dating”
- Connect little businesses
- Interpret/educate city policies
- Highlight local business is communications
- Business crawl
- Internship opportunities for businesses

Why be part of a Business Association?

- Resources
- Knowing what is going on
- We don't know it all, need input
- Less promotional work to do
- Customer contact with potentially overlooked audiences
- A conduit between city and businesses

Ranking importance of above topics/items:

- Business crawl – 9 stars
- Resources – 6 stars
- Meaningful networking like “speed dating” – 6 stars
- A conduit between city and businesses – 4 stars
- Customer contact with potentially overlooked audiences – 2 stars
- Internship opportunities for businesses – 2 stars
- Marketing other than special events – 2 stars

BREAKOUT SESSION:

Business Crawl

- Open house walk - have a punchcard or stamp “passport”; complete it all and get prize (donated by businesses)

- Open to businesses or public?
- Idea share open house
- Highlight 3-4 businesses at a time during evening or weekend for businesses to get to know each other, serve snacks/drinks, offer behind the scenes look

#### Resources

- Networking – business crawl, static web communications, event based
- Advertising support – media buying, counseling, design of ads, cooperative media buys
- Contact lists – different lists for different needs (ie. internships, job postings, business consulting, directory, etc.)
- Outreach opportunities
- Blenders/mixers – people need to attend in order to network

#### City-Business Conduit

- Downtown business policy committee for things such as outdoor seating, sign/encroachment sidewalk
- Explain/inform sign permits and rules, sandwich boards, temporary signs and banners
- Public space – grassy area
- Business Improvement District or Special Service Area with UBA Management for snow removal, beautification, security, special events, downtown branding, cleanup, street furniture, signage and way-finding
- UBA as an educator of city policy (ie. sign permits, outdoor seating, what you can and can't do, when you can do it, etc.)

#### Skill Directory

- Spreadsheet profiles
- Barter directly or piggybacking cycle
- Build directory – collect data, allow access online, create expectations
- Also a resource and a form of networking

#### Networking

- Featured business profile in member e-newsletter
- Attend the Urbana Blenders – lots of times this doesn't fit schedules
- Read UBA emails